

THE NEED OF KNOWLEDGE, CONSCIENCE AND CONSCIENTIOUSNESS IN THE DIDACTIC ACT

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*We are the sum of the books we have read and,
even more, of the people we have met.*

Andrei Pleșu

Abstract

In a complicated, fluid and versatile world, power is no longer held by those who possess information as, nowadays, information is available to everybody. The one who has knowledge, namely the capacity to understand the world in which one lives, has the opportunity to progress. Knowledge helps neither the one who knows nor the one who expects support for his development, in the absence of the conscientiousness on the role to be played, within the education process, by both magister and disciple. Accordingly, no quality leap can be registered in the absence of one's own conscience – especially social conscience. Such objectives, of bringing together knowledge, conscience and conscientiousness, and social awareness may transform the society of today.

Keywords: *education, knowledge, conscience, conscientiousness, character.*

World is changing at a staggering pace, as human thinking (with all its vacillations) is now replaced by computer thinking, while the (previously demanded and demanding) physical effort comes to be substituted by an ever-increasingly complex technology.

In a world experiencing a continuous technological evolution, certain jobs disappear while some new, unexpected ones (such as drone pilot), are regarded as a challenge to education. Nowadays, our brain is less challenged to solve some problems of arithmetics, being more involved in discerning which trade mark or which product is better, by considering a series of indices – such as the quality–price ratio or its lifetime (*versus* the launching, on the market, of a new product, with different parameters).

Related to the rhythm of technological development, an educational dilemma is now

manifesting, around the extent to which knowledge should be dosed for leaving space to the conscientiousness of one's social position (and of its derived responsibilities), while also considering one's responsible individual conscience.

The dilemma of such a balance is a biunivocal one as, on one side, we have the magister/ professor, who attempts at dosing the content of his discipline according to his own perception upon the world and, on the other, the disciple/student, who is expected not only to respond to the education process but also to visualize the challenges he will have to face in the end of the study years.

According to Webster' Dictionary, *knowledge* is the condition of knowing something with a considerable extent of familiarity, gained through either experience or contact or association with the respective individual or object, as well as a theoretical or practical understanding within a certain branch of science, art, teaching or of other zone, involving study, investigation and practice for acquiring certain abilities (BABCOCK GOVE, 1993).

Consequently, no special efforts are to be made for understanding that knowledge assumes by no means mastering of a set of information about some process or phenomenon, being instead an action of understanding the respective information, which offers the possibility of its subsequent utilization.

Knowledge assumes reaching of conclusions extracted from the pattern suggested by the available information, starting from the training degree of the individual and according to the culture to which he belongs.

Knowledge is essential in the modern society as the huge volume of information provokes a profound process of thinking, while it may simultaneously act as its most important blocking agent, as a result of informational suffocation.

Knowledge is an individual quality (given by the intellectual capacity of the individual), however its also has a social part (given by the educational objectives of the society), whose more intense presence is expected, especially in teachers and trainers.

The master, in his double position of learner and teacher, should identify the (quantitative and qualitative) parameters of knowledge and recommend to his disciple the manner in which can they be turned to good account.

The optimum ratio between quantity (repetition is the mother of learning) and quality is difficult to identify, however some relation may be established between what is absolutely necessary to keep in mind (as the skeleton of knowledge) and what is necessary to search (in handbooks or databases).

The idea (generally accepted in the Romanian society) that all disciplines are equally important and that all lectures of a discipline are vital is harmful for both student and professor.

A comprehensive approach of the training process of the future academic should observe the theoretical parameters established in curricula (basic, optional and elective disciplines), thus favorizing the formation of an individual who can better understand the role he is expected to play in the society.

Promotion of the idea that a student (who has free access to data bases, which appear often as essential for knowledge) should memorize all information available in his domain should only reduce the interest for such a process.

Knowledge is the total sum of all the world knows, the whole body of truths, facts, information, principles or of other objects of knowledge acquired by mankind, the main aspect of this definition being the relation between information and knowledge, more exactly, the fact that information, experience and learning represent the basics of knowledge (PORUMBEANU, n.d.).

Scientific knowledge (epistemé), which has precise objectives, is based on rules, being

developed in an organized and systematized manner. It is a type of critical knowledge with a specific methodology and a conceptual language, a series of forms (scientific observation, scientific experiment, scientific hypothesis and scientific theory), its main methods being: axiomatization, formalization, modelling (STROE, 2000).

According to some young researchers, this type of knowledge tends to be substituted by common knowledge (doxa), based on observation and attained spontaneously by people in everyday life, without the application of some special methods. This type of knowledge has no critical components, its results appearing as elementary data about reality, with a low generalization level, and knowledge expressed in a natural, not rigorous language.

Such a behaviour may be explained by the quite frequent tendency of considering equal the transmission of information and the transmission of knowledge, which is wrong, not only from the perspective of communication itself but also of its technical support or, more exactly, of its digital content. A piece of information may be transmitted as a succession of data or simply as a message, news or announce involving exclusively the action of defining an event (object). The transmitter and receiver of an information should not be necessarily compatible from the viewpoint of their education and training, cultural etc., level; more than that, they do not personalize the content involved.

To correct such behaviors one should act upon the conscientiousness process of both disciple and magister, starting from the idea that the one who has knowledge also possesses the instrument of its transfer.

Conscientiousness is the process of internal (self-explaining) and external (expressing for the others) verbalization of self-conscience, namely the process of verbal explaining-expressing of its contents.

Conscientiousness of one's social status (from the part of the magister) and of social becoming (in the case of the disciple) appear as main aspects in the development of the didactic act.

It is difficult to imagine that a person gets formed exclusively by acquiring knowledge (even if this is simple to do), without the need of self-understanding and self-expressing.

One's conscientiousness on the place and role he has and plays in a microgroup (the professional class) as well as in the community is essential for granting one's personal contribution in the profession.

Conscientiousness refers to a situation and to the result of the complex interactions between one's previous cognizances (and beliefs) and the actual perception of reality. Each individual has his own manner of becoming conscious of something, whichever the case. Common education and training are meant at offering to participants the same data, information and up-to-dated knowledge, capable of inducing a similar manner of perception or of warning. Without a definite conscientiousness, no sufficient motivation will be manifested and, implicitly, no commitment and devoted participation (partial commitment produces only partial effects and, implicitly, fissures within the whole system).

According to Maslow, conscientiousness is marked by the fifth level of needs (that of self-accomplishment, specific to only 15% of the population); it includes self-realization, professional updating, development of projects, perfecting, creation and maximization of the essential aspects (ROMAN, 2013), which expresses the ratio between the contribution of knowledge and that of wishing to offer knowledge. Social conscience is formed and developed along the history of the society, representing the reflection of people's social existence, while individual conscience is formed and developed during each person's ontogenesis, representing the reflection of one's own existence, of the specific individual conditions of living, activity, education.

Through education, social conscience intervenes in the formation of individual conscience, imparting to it a general meaning, corresponding to the historical needs.

The process of making conscious one's professional value is centered on the development of self-esteem, and, even more important, on the idea of self-abnegation, namely on conscience, all these aspects being assimilated in a rational educational process, based on the idea of modesty, courage, empathy, integrity, autonomy and intellectual and decisional objectivity.

Intellectual modesty should be manifested by the awareness of one's personal limits, sensitivity to the circumstances in which native egocentrism may be self-misleading and a higher sensitivity to preconceived ideas. Intellectual modesty is determined by the recognition of one's limits of knowledge, involving no lack of principle and humbleness, but only the absence of intellectual arrogance, of boasting or of haughtiness, combined with logical introspection or, in their absence, with other people's opinions, to be observed in certain situations (PAUL & ELDER, 2006).

All such manifestations of personality will help the individual to have a correct attitude both in his professional relations and, more than that, in the relation with his external partners.

Intellectual courage *versus* intellectual cowardness is another necessary quality, starting from the idea that the conscience of a need for confrontation and for advancing towards ideas, opinions, points of view for which we manifest intense negative emotions and to which we have never drawn our full attention, represents the intellectual courage of our volitive manifestation. This type of courage is related to the acceptance of the fact that the ideas considered as dangerous or absurd may be sometimes justified, even if they are not always - wholly or only partially - rational, and also if some of the conclusions and opinions inoculated in our conscience may be sometimes either false or deceiving (ROMAN, 2013).

Intellectual courage is generated by the fact that one can hardly grasp the truth in ideas apriorically considered as dangerous and absurd. To be faithful to our own thinking, in such circumstances, one needs courage and the capacity to explore deeply, to militate for progress, to have a perspective thinking and to be convinced that nobody can punish us for the courage of these thoughts. This quality should not be confused with the lack of discipline or with behavioral non-conformism, which may be dangerous, indeed. Once having enumerated the ideas and established the arguments, one should find out whether they had been correctly understood and accept the criticism or reserves of the others, or even their rejection.

Intellectual empathy *versus* intellectual intolerance represents another necessary treat as, to acquire the conscientiousness of the need of

putting ourselves in the place of the others, to really understand them, one should become aware of the human egocentric tendency of identifying the truth with our immediate perceptions on a manner of thinking or with an opinion that may appear as old-fashioned or not related to the context (ROMAN, 2013). This characteristic is correlated with the ability of reconstructing and accepting the opinions and arguments of the others, of judging starting from premises, hypotheses and ideas different from ours. Such a quality gets correlated with the acceptance of the idea that, in our past, we had moments in which, in spite of a strong belief that we had been right, this could not be proved. A behavior of this type will grant us the possibility of having an open, positive dialogue, of including in this acceptance behavior other interpretative or analytical patterns and, above all, of manifesting cultural acceptance, be it of occidental or oriental source.

The main feature of intellectual autonomy and of intellectual nonconformism assumes a rational control over one's personal opinions, values and deductions. The idea involves critical thinking, namely learning to think not only for one's own interest but also for taking over the control of one's own cognitive process, against some social well-established rules. Such a behavior assumes the obligation to analyze and evaluate the opinions of the others starting from proofs and arguments, to have doubts about ourselves, when this is rational, to believe only when it is rational to believe, and to obey when it is rational to obey (PAUL & ELDER, 2006).

Intellectual integrity *versus* intellectual hypocrisy represents the main modality of recognizing the need to be honest with our own thoughts, of observing the intellectual standards we are applying, and the same strict standards of our position, of practising the same standards for the others, and of honestly admitting any discrepancy and inconsistency in our own manner of thinking and acting (ROMAN, 2013). This is the only manner of demonstrating one's moral and professional integrity, and of proving the desire of working with our partners in a most sincere way. Moral uprightness is the building element, once the perception of all participants may express the extent of our

commitment, with all our forces and with no discriminations.

The conscious need of resorting to intellectual intuitions and truths, in spite of all difficulties, obstacles and frustrations, the steadfast adherence to rational principles, in spite of the unreasonable opposition of the others, the urge to struggle against confusion and unsolved questions, to attain a more profound understanding, draws the image of intellectual integrity. Distancing from intellectual exercise, acceptance of ignorance or self-saturation of one's experience appear as most dangerous attitudes. The tendency of displaying the experience we have got is not a mistake, however, to believe that this is sufficient for remaining at a certain status, without resorting to study, analysis and anticipation, is definitely detrimental to progress.

The belief that, on long term, one's own objectives, along with those of the whole mankind, will be attained by free reasoning, thus encouraging people to draw their own conclusions by the development of rational aptitudes, should be a permanent concern. If adequately encouraged and cultivated, people may learn to think with their own head, to elaborate rational considerations, to formulate judicious conclusions, to think in a coherent and logical manner, to convince one another, in spite of the obstacles deeply rooted in the native character of human and social life, thus attaining the performances of team work.

Intellectual objectivity *versus* intellectual subjectivity is manifested by a conscious need of treating the multitude of opinions with the same attention, on disregard of one's own sentiments or interests, or of the sentiments and interests of the others (ROMAN, 2013).

Scientific and practical investigations evidence the tendency of being subjective in our relations with the others, as we use to impart to them qualities and defects characteristic to the culture from which we come, which is detrimental in action, as it assumes limited confidence and, as a rule, modifies one's conduct and affects the final scope.

To prevent such a conduct it is important to develop a certain style of work and to recognize that the situations in which we are to develop our activities induce a certain subjectivism from

our part, however we have the duty of self-control, as such a manifestation is, to a certain extent, the result of the manifestation of our conscience.

All these behavioral aspects enrich the conscience of what we are and define our character, as these two notions are related between them. Description of one's character considers certain categories of features which determine some moral attitudes, oriented towards ourselves, towards the others and towards the whole society, as well as towards our own social activity. They refer to dignity and self-respect, generosity, sincerity, loyalty, principledness, industry, perseverance, discipline, social involvement, all of them susceptible to quantitative appreciation (Caracter, n.d.).

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